

Howardian Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Annual Report 2006/07

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 2006/07 Review of the work of the AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

It has been a year of consolidation, with the Partnership working hard to implement the Objectives of the AONB Management Plan. Unfortunately our aspirations for carrying out practical countryside management work could not be fully matched financially by the Countryside Agency (who merged with other organisations to form Natural England in October 2006). Nevertheless, we managed to complete a substantial amount of work on our primary aim – conserving and enhancing the AONB landscape. The Sustainable Development Fund also continued to attract high quality applications, with nearly £66,000 being allocated to projects.

In the Foreword to our 2005/06 Review I highlighted the new opportunities that the Single Payment and Environmental Stewardship Schemes offered for sustainable agriculture and land management. It is unfortunate that the problems at the Rural Payments Agency continued in 2006, and indeed continue still, with subsequent knock-on effects for the budgets of both the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and our own conservation grants. One of the biggest issues now facing land management is the role it can play in addressing the effects of climate change. The debate over whether arable crops should be used for food or biofuel; the growing of energy crops such as miscanthus; and the demand for woodland products to fuel electricity and heat generation all make for interesting times ahead. These issues however are beginning to bring some hope of better financial returns back to the land management sector. The AONB Committee will continue to work with our farmers and landowners, to address these new challenges in a way that conserves and enhances the AONB landscape for future generations.



William Worsley
Chairman, Joint Advisory Committee

ADMINISTRATION

Local Authorities are responsible for the management arrangements within the AONB, which falls within the County of North Yorkshire and the Districts of Ryedale and Hambleton. AONB policy and programmes of work are overseen by a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), supported by Officer groups. The Core Funders Group consists of representatives of the 4 main funding bodies (see Financial Statement). The AONB Partnership Group takes in a wider range of organisations and interests and helps with developing ideas/projects.

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

North Yorkshire County Council –

Cllrs Caroline Patmore & Clare Wood

Ryedale District Council –

Cllrs Robert Wainwright & Jim Bailey

Hambleton District Council –

Cllrs Percy Featherstone & Christine Cookman

Countryside Agency/Natural England –

Sara Schultz/Martin O'Hanlon

Parish Councils (Ryedale) – Ian Reid

Parish Councils (Hambleton) – Dr Tony Cowan

Country Land and Business Association –

William Worsley

National Farmers Union – Stephen Prest & Ken Harrison

Ramblers Association – Dr Geoff Eastwood

English Nature/Natural England –

Andrew Windrum/Justine Clark

Forestry Commission – Mick Hoban

The JAC met twice in 2006/07:

26th October 2006: Oswaldkirk Village Hall. William Worsley and Robert Wainwright were re-elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. Members also discussed the proposed 2007/08 JAC budget, the progress of the Sustainable Development Fund, a speeding traffic initiative and also a number of significant planning applications that required responses.

29th March 2007: Hovingham Village Hall. Members discussed the work achieved in 2006/07 and approved the Business Plan and Action Programme for 2007/08. They also discussed work completed on reviewing our publicity and interpretation initiatives, as well as ideas for celebrating forthcoming anniversaries of the AONB designation.

The JAC carried out its tour of works completed in 2005/06 on **14th July 2006**, visiting projects in the Hambleton area of the AONB.

Officer Steering Groups

The Core Funders Group convened on its regular quarterly cycle, whilst the AONB Partnership Group met in early April 2007 to review progress made with implementing the Objectives of the AONB Management Plan over the last year. This meeting was held in the evening and Parish Council representatives were also invited.

The AONB Unit

In 2006/07 the Unit comprised:

AONB Officer	Paul Jackson
Assistant AONB Officer	Liz Bassindale
AONB Administrative Assistant (18.5 hrs/wk)	Sue Wright

AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Management Plan is the key document setting out specific objectives for the sustainable management of the Howardian Hills AONB. Engaging in the strategic plans and actions of other organisations is an important role for the AONB Unit.

In 2006/07 AONB staff engaged with the strategies of many organisations, including:

- Ryedale District Council Local Development Framework
- Hambleton District Council Local Development Framework
- North Yorkshire County Council Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework
- North Yorkshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Environmental Stewardship Scheme HLS targeting
- Ryedale Biodiversity Action Plan
- Ryedale Community Sports Strategy

NATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Howardian Hills AONB is part of the national 'family' of 49 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is an important umbrella body that co-ordinates lobbying on behalf of all AONBs, responds to national consultations and organises training events. Support and participation in NAAONB activities brings many benefits for the Howardian Hills and is important for staff development.

In 2006/07:

- Paul Jackson continued on the Management Board of the NAAONB and attended 5 Board meetings
- As a member of the Management Board, Paul Jackson attended the 50th Anniversary event in Gower AONB in May 2006 and the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Forum
- The Vice-Chairman and AONB Officer attended a Regional Chairmen's meeting held in York
- AONB Unit staff attended 1 Northern AONB Group meeting, at the Northumberland Coast AONB
- AONB Unit staff attended 7 NAAONB seminars/ training events, including the NAAONB and Europarc Conferences
- 2 articles were contributed to the NAAONB magazine 'Outstanding'
- We entered all our local events onto the NAAONB's national events website www.visitaonb.org
- A letterhead incorporating the 50th Anniversary logo of the national AONB designation was produced and used from May 2006 to May 2007
- The Northern Group of AONBs produced a 2007 calendar to showcase our landscapes and wildlife

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2006/07

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Natural England	172,837	Staffing	84,291
North Yorkshire CC	36,760	Office costs	14,391
Ryedale DC	6,977	Partnership running costs	2,260
Hambleton DC	5,800	Publicity	11,477
Natural England	1,000	Countryside Management	29,690
Heritage Lottery Fund	4,489	Access & Interpretation	7,752
CAN DO Partnership	2,500	Community Initiatives	5,143
FEP preparation fees	1,035	Sustainable Development Fund	72,772
Additional Income	3,568		
<i>Brought forward</i>	<i>9,576</i>	<i>Carried forward</i>	<i>16,766</i>
	£244,542		£244,542
		(Resources from grant recipients)	407,619
		Total Value of AONB Unit Activity	£652,161

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURAL BEAUTY

This is the primary objective of AONB designation and much time and effort is spent on working towards this aim. The JAC attaches great importance to carrying out work on the ground in the AONB, working in partnership with local farmers, landowners and communities.

Work funded or facilitated by the JAC in 2006/07 included:

- 1.7km of new hedge planting and gapping-up
- Repairs/maintenance to 365m of roadside walls
- Felling 1.5ha (3.7 acres) of native woodland/plantation at Gilling, in preparation for conversion to native broadleaves
- 5 black poplar cuttings planted-out in the AONB; a further 10 cuttings taken
- Surveys of 5 potential SINC's
- 7 new sites surveyed to check for knapweed broomrape
- Detailed survey of 1 SINC
- Conservation grazing of 6 SINC's or other important sites by Exmoor ponies
- Management of scrub/vegetation on 5 SINC's and 2 other important sites
- Management works on 38 Special Interest Road Verges
- Salt bins installed on 2 Special Interest Road Verges
- 0.6ha of heathland restored in Yearsley Moor plantation
- Restoration of 1 pond
- 2 barn owl boxes installed
- Repairs to 6m of historic Park Wall and 150m of Park ha-ha
- Completion of major repairs to Listed pigeon cote at Oswaldkirk
- 1 Listed milepost restored and repainted
- 2 traditional direction signs repainted
- Maintenance of the City of Troy turf Maze
- Overhead electricity cables in Terrington undergrounded

In addition to initiating and grant aiding work itself, the AONB Unit also gives advice to applicants and/or comments on applications submitted to the two main national grant schemes:

- 11 farmers/landowners advised about Entry Level or Higher Level Stewardship
- 1 Farm Environment Plan prepared
- 1 Environmental Stewardship application consultation appraised
- 17 EWGS application consultations appraised for impact on the AONB; minor comments submitted on 6 schemes



Restored ha-ha wall, Gilling Castle

Planning Issues

The Joint Advisory Committee is consulted by the Local Planning Authorities on major developments in the AONB, in line with an agreed protocol. The AONB Officer also monitors the Weekly List of planning applications and calls-up details of any smaller schemes which might potentially have an impact on the AONB. Consultation responses are dealt with by the AONB Officer, in consultation with the JAC and Chairman for more contentious proposals.

Larger applications examined in 2006/07 included sports pitch floodlighting at Gilling and Ampleforth and the erection of free-range egg production sheds near Oulston and Terrington. On-going development proposals included a 25-pitch caravan site near Whenby and a mobile phone mast near Hovingham, whilst enforcement action on a site at Huttons Ambo was supported.

During 2006/07:

- 156 applications were determined by the Local Planning Authorities. 92% of these were approved
- 28 of the applications were scrutinised in detail by the AONB Officer
- Comments were submitted on 13 schemes, where a conflict with AONB Objectives was identified or support was given
- Objections or Strong Reservations were lodged in 5 of those responses; the District or County Council followed the JAC's recommendation of refusal, or the applicants submitted more acceptable proposals, in all of the 4 cases where a decision was required (1 application withdrawn)
- 21 consultations on other development (primarily within roads or verges) were also scrutinised



Volunteers controlling willow scrub on a fen site near Crambe

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

2006/07 was the third year of our AONB Discovery Project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is a 5-year programme of educational work with local primary schools. Each year 6 schools spend a day learning about the AONB, both in the classroom and out on-site. A Young Ranger Club in the school holidays shows children features of the natural world and local culture that can be found all around them. The number of Ranger Club sessions doubled (to 10) in 2006, with half being held in the summer and half during the Christmas holidays.

In 2006/07 the programme consisted of:

Discovery Days

- Terrington CP – 23 pupils
- St Hilda's, Ampleforth – 23 pupils
- Amotherby – 31 pupils
- Hovingham – 19 pupils
- Sheriff Hutton – 33 pupils
- Crayke – 30 pupils

Young Ranger Club (summer)

- Minibeast Safari – 17 children
- Weather & Kites – 26 children
- Rocking with Geology – 5 children
- Wet & Wild (pond dipping) – 28 children
- Wet & Wild (pond dipping) – 5 children

Young Ranger Club (winter)

- Feed the Birds – 19 children
- Tree Skeletons – 16 children
- Nature Detectives – 26 children
- Star Trekking (Clear skies) – 24 children
- Festive Fun (traditional decorations) – 19 children

PUBLICITY

Stories achieving coverage in print, on TV and the radio in 2006/07 included the undergrounding of overhead electricity cables at Terrington, woodland management proposals at Craykeland Wood (Newburgh) and the launch of a Local Information and Walks leaflet based on Hovingham village.



Young Ranger Club day at Ampleforth, making windsock fish

In 2006/07 we:

- Maintained the 14 AONB Gateway Signs
- Obtained at least 55 known press mentions for projects/AONB, equivalent to at least £81,300 of advertising space
- Used the AONB display boards at 10 consultations/ events
- Distributed the AONB general information leaflet to 3 Tourist Information Centres and 18 other outlets
- Published and distributed our annual Newsletter (AONB News) in October 2006
- Published and distributed our 2005/06 Annual Report in July 2006
- Maintained the AONB website, which received 28,000 visits during 2006/07
- Commissioned a new AONB website, with a fresher image and incorporating an interactive map to display information
- Attended Ryedale Show, with a quiz on all the AONBs in the UK (to mark the 50th Anniversary of the designation nationally)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Sustainable Development Fund was again available in 2006/07. £65,800 was distributed to projects in the Howardian Hills, assisting a variety of schemes addressing environmental, social and economic objectives. This is an important grant fund, which allows us to support a wide range of projects that benefit the AONB and its communities, complementing the work we carry out on improvements to the natural beauty of the AONB landscape.

In 2006/07 the Sustainable Development Fund assisted:

- The installation of sustainable heating and lighting infrastructure in Welburn's new Village Hall
- The creation of a wildlife and organic kitchen garden at Foston Primary School
- A cardboard and paper re-cycling service for businesses in the AONB, together with furniture and white goods re-cycling for residents. Run by a centre for students of all ages with learning disabilities. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)
- A Sustainable Development calendar for the Hambleton and City of York area. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)
- Eco-renovation surveys of 9 Village Halls
- Creation of external access to the toilet facilities of Welburn's new Village Hall, as a service for visitors
- A feasibility study for the Global to Local Connection Scheme for local schools
- A local recipe book produced by Terrington WI for their village festival
- Low-energy light bulbs for Ampleforth Village Hall

- A brokerage service for supplying hardwood timber beams for building construction and restoration. (Joint project with North York Moors National Park)
- Compost bins for Oswaldkirk Church

In addition to the above schemes, we secured enough free low-energy light bulbs from Philips Electric to supply all the Village Halls in the AONB, thereby making a significant contribution to the reduction of their running costs and CO₂ emissions.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The AONB Management Plan is delivered via the policies and actions of many partner organisations, but we also make use of a number of sources of specialist help and assistance.

In 2006/07:

- We continued to contract the North York Moors National Park to help deliver our Sustainable Development Fund
- The Native Woodland Development Officer continued to work across the National Park and AONB areas
- We continued our active involvement in the CAN DO partnership, including the bid for major HLF funding
- Volunteers participated in 14 projects or tasks, equating to 35 person/days of assistance

ENJOYING THE AONB

The Public Rights of Way network continues to be managed to a high standard, although minor improvement works have continued over the whole network. More complex path routing issues continue to be resolved at a gradual rate, depending on their complexity, whilst volunteers are now making a significant contribution to path condition surveying.

In 2006/07:

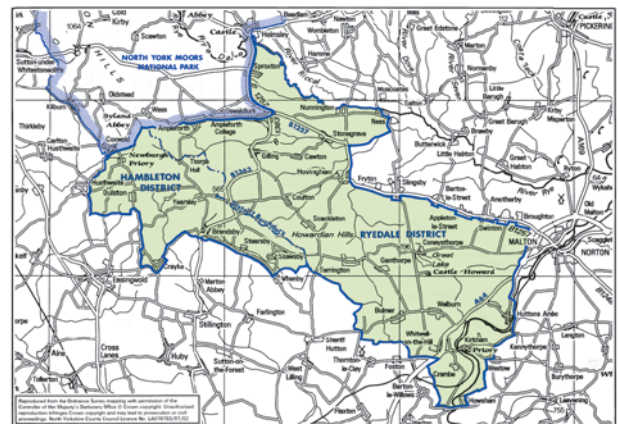
- New fingerpost signs, gates and bridges were installed at various locations throughout the AONB, continuing the improvement programme
- A Local Information and Walks leaflet was published for Hovingham
- Signposting was installed on a permissive path in Hovingham, as part of the development of the circular walks leaflet
- Condition surveying of 39 routes (30.75km) of Rights of Way was carried out by volunteers
- Litter was removed from at least 12 sites in the AONB, on a regular basis throughout the summer
- A speeding initiative was launched in the B1257 villages, using speed awareness stickers on wheelie bins



AONB Volunteer surveying Rights of Way condition

HOWARDIAN HILLS AONB FACT FILE

- The Howardian Hills covers 204 sq. km (79 sq. miles)
- The area was confirmed as an AONB in 1987
- About 5,800 people live in the area
- Over 15% of the area is wooded



AONB CONTACTS

AONB Officer

Paul Jackson

paul.jackson@northyorks.gov.uk

Assistant AONB Officer

Liz Bassindale

liz.bassindale@northyorks.gov.uk

AONB Administrative Assistant

Sue Wright (part-time)

Sue.E.Wright@northyorks.gov.uk

The Mews, Wath Court
Hovingham, York
YO62 4NN

Telephone (01653) 627164

info@howardianhills.org.uk

www.howardianhills.org.uk

Photos: AONB Unit

